

IRS, SBA JOIN FORCES TO HELP SMALL BUSINESSES

WASHINGTON -- The Internal Revenue Service and Small Business Administration have teamed up on several new programs designed to help small businesses handle tax issues.

The new effort includes offering tax forms and publications at SBA offices and placing IRS experts at several SBA locations, IRS Commissioner Charles Rossotti and SBA Administrator Aida Alvarez announced at a Thursday morning press conference.

The programs reflect a growing partnership between the two agencies aimed at providing timely, convenient tax information for the small business community. The joint effort will let small businesses get time-saving assistance from both agencies at one location and help start-up business owners understand their tax requirements.

"This partnership will make tax help easily accessible to more small businesses," Rossotti said. "The ultimate goal is making tax time easier for everyone, whether it's a small business operator or an individual taxpayer."

"For many small business owners, understanding the tax implications of owning a small business is a challenge," Alvarez said. "The goal of this new program is to help start-up business owners understand small business tax requirements and their compliance responsibilities before a problem arises."

The new programs being launched are:

- **Tax information.** In a new national program, the IRS is offering a wide range of key small business tax forms and publications at all 73 of SBA's Business Information Centers (BIC) and One-Stop Capital Shops. This expands on a pilot program tested at five BIC locations for a year.
- **Tax experts.** Another new program places IRS technical specialists at SBA Business Information Centers in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago and Los Angeles for one day each week. The IRS experts will provide an array of services including small business workshops, classes, one-on-one assistance and distribution of small business tax forms and publications. The sites will not handle any tax preparation activities.

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- **CD-ROM.** The two agencies produced a small business CD-ROM, "Small Business Resource Guide: What You Need To Know About Taxes and Other Topics." The CD-ROM is available at the BICs and features information centering on the stages of the business life cycle. The CD-ROM has fill-in-the-blank forms, searchable publications and links to important web sites.
- **Small business web sites.** The IRS web site has added a "Small Business Corner" that provides tax information for small business entrepreneurs. The web site can be accessed at www.irs.ustreas.gov and looking under the "Tax Info for Business" section. The IRS site also links to the SBA and other important small business web sites.

The SBA site, at www.sba.gov includes details on the Business Information Centers and other information for the small business community.

Small business owners should periodically visit the IRS web site because it is frequently updated with new information.

Rossotti said the expanding partnership effort with the SBA complements the IRS modernization program. In the IRS's upcoming reorganization, the agency will be divided into four areas to provide better service. One of these areas will be the Small Business and Self-Employed Operating Division.

The Small Business and Self-Employed unit will serve about 40 million tax filers. These businesses pay the IRS about \$559 billion annually, representing about 40 percent of the total revenue collected.

"These companies form a key part of the economy, and it is crucial for us to help small businesses meet their tax needs," Rossotti said.

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